

Goodall Grand Concert Short Scale

Top craftsmanship and attention to detail add up to tons of tone.

by Doug Young

In the quest to create exquisite guitars at less than boutique prices, several guitar builders are bridging the gap between the mass-production techniques of the biggest names and individual luthiers who build handcrafted guitars in small numbers. Goodall Guitars is an example of a relatively small shop endeavoring to adapt the best of both worlds—producing guitars with the attention to detail of a hand-built guitar at prices that compete with the larger companies. James Goodall has been building guitars since 1972, initially setting up shop in California before moving his operation to Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, in 1992. His guitars are prized for their distinctive, rich sound as well as the attractive, high-quality woods used in their construction. Goodall builds a wide range of styles and body sizes, from a small parlor to the mighty 17-inch jumbo. The Goodall reviewed here was just released last summer and is a short-scale variation of Goodall's Grand Concert model. And as with all Goodalls, the Grand Concert is available with several woods and appointments.

REFINED ELEGANCE

With a 15-inch lower bout, the Goodall Grand Concert is a balanced and comfortable guitar. Though approximately the same width as an OM, the guitar feels bigger, due in part to a body that exceeds standard OM depth by about ¼ inch.

Visually, this guitar exudes understated elegance and class. There are few non-wooden elements and the tight-grained, master-grade Sitka spruce top, surrounded by colorful koa binding, exhibits a subtle but beautiful silking pattern. A transparent pickguard is all but invisible, presenting a clean and uncluttered look. East Indian rosewood on the back and sides is straight-grained with striking figure and color that does much to

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set the guitar apart from the off-the-shelf, mass-produced pack. The one-piece mahogany bolt-on

neck feels exceptionally stable and features some particularly strong figuring.

BIG SOUND WITH EASY PLAYABILITY

The Goodall is a joy to play. The neck felt solid and substantial with a smooth and comfortable, round profile, and the 25-inch scale was easy on the fingers. The guitar's intonation was perfect, and the tone was balanced across the entire range.

As is typical of most Goodalls, the Grand Concert had a huge, deep bass; bright, shimmery highs with lots of overtones; and seemingly endless sustain. These qualities were particularly apparent when playing open first-position chords. This tone worked well for delicate fingerstyle pieces, especially in alternate tunings. The treble strings had a pleasing crispness without sounding thin, and I found that the big bottom end, combined with the guitar's excellent sustain, provided a strong foundation for Celtic fiddle tunes. The sustain in the



At a Glance

Goodall Grand Concert Short Scale

THE SPECS	Solid mastergrade spruce top, Solid Indian rosewood back and sides. Koa binding. One piece mahogany bolt-on neck, ebony fretboard and bridge. 25-inch scale. 1¾ inches wide at the nut, 2¼ inches at the saddle. Gotoh 510 tuners. Light Elixir Phosphor Bronze Nanoweb Strings. Made in USA.
THIS IS COOL	Short scale is easy on the fingers without sacrificing support for lowered tunings.
WATCH FOR	Transparent pickguard might not withstand a pick. Distinctive, contemporary sound may not appeal to traditionalists.
PRICE	\$4,387 list.
MAKER	Goodall Guitars: (808) 329-8237; www.goodallguitars.com .

HEATHER SWAIN. GUITAR COURTESY OF THE GUITAR SOLO, SAN FRANCISCO



Gotoh 510 tuners grace the headstock.

higher strings also made it easy to accent melodic lines when playing fingerstyle.

Conventional wisdom says that short-scale guitars are a poor choice for alternate tunings (especially those that lower several strings), but the Goodall exhibited superior sustain in D A D G A D, open-G, and low-C tunings, even with light-gauge strings.

Although the guitar responded well to a light touch, it also had plenty of headroom, and produced great volume when pushed. As a result, I was quite impressed with the sound I got when I took a break from playing fingerstyle and tried strumming with a pick. In this context, the Goodall created a superb rhythm sound that filled the room and could easily compete with—and sometimes dominate—other instruments in a jam.

The Goodall also provided excellent tones in the recording studio. In spite of its big sound, the guitar did not overwhelm the microphones with any particular frequency, and I was able to get a balanced sound very quickly. The combination of deep bass and bright overtones helped produce a recorded sound that was big and warm, but also clear and articulate.

THE WRAP

Their unique tone and high-quality construction make Goodall guitars an appealing choice for anyone who wants a contemporary, high-end instrument. This Goodall has the added appeal of a short-scale neck that's comfortable to play and flexible enough for dropped tunings. Its body size and balanced tone make this guitar an excellent choice for fingerstyle players, while providing enough versatility for other styles—all in a guitar as exquisitely crafted as any boutique model offering.

AG

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ACOUSTIC GUITAR (ISSN 1049-9261) is published monthly by String Letter Publishing, Inc., 255 West End Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901. Periodicals postage paid at San Anselmo and additional mailing offices. Printed in USA.